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OPEMAM Analysis

ELECTION REPORT:

KYRGYZSTAN / Presidential Elections

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Background to the elections:

When Kyrgyzstan held its last presidential elections in July 2009, former President Bakiyev's authoritarian tendencies were at their height and he manoeuvred to neutralise any uncertainty around the final result. Such was the certainty that the Central Electoral Commission would name Bakiyev the winner that the main opposition candidate Almazbek Atambayev withdrew his candidature before the polling stations had even closed, condemning the multiple irregularities that had tarnished the process. Some two years later, it seemed that these would be the first open-ended presidential elections in the history of Central Asia, even though the sitting-prime minister Atambayev was this time round the favourite.

In any case, these elections were called to bring an end to a cycle of institutional instability that commenced with the overthrow of the then-President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in April 2010. After three visits to the polls (a constitutional referendum in June 2010, parliamentary elections in October 2010 and these 2011 presidential elections) it is hoped that Kyrgyzstan will return to some semblance of institutional normality with the transfer of power from provisional President Roza Otunbayeva to a newly elected president. Finally worth underlining, was the climate of tension in the south of the country provoked by fears of a new crisis of political instability - either as a consequence of post-electoral uprisings, led by the candidates Tashiev or Madumarov, or by a repeat of the attempt at ethnic cleansing that occurred in June 2010.

Quantitative indices of democracy:

Kyrgyzstan was classified in the following rankings of democratic performance at the time of these elections:

Measurement	Name and year of report or database	Institution	Index	Points, ranking and classification
Political rights and freedom	Freedom House Report 2011	Freedom House (FH)	PR: political rights CL: civil liberties	PR: 5, CL: (Scale of 1, free to 7, not free) Classif: partially free
Degree of democracy in earlier elections	Polyarchy 2.0 2004 (referring to the 2000 presidential elections)	Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) and Tatu Vanhanen	ID: Synthetic Democracy index, Part: Participation, Comp: competition	ID: 11, max 49 Part: 43,1, max 70 Comp: 25,5, max 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30) Classification: Non-democratic
Consolidation of authoritarian and democratic institutions	Polity IV 2010	Center for International Development and Conflict Management, Univ. of Maryland	Democracy: consolidation of democratic institutions Autocracy: authoritarian consolidation Polity: synthesis of both	Democracy: 7 Autocracy: 0 Polity: +7 (Scale of +10, very democratic to -10, very authoritarian) Classif: democratic
Perception of corruption	Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2010	Transparency International	TICPI: Perception of corruption index	TICPI: 2 points out of 10 , (Scale of 1 very corrupt to 10 not at all corrupt) Ranking: 169 out of 180 countries

Management of political and economic change	Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2010	Bertelsmann Foundation	MI: Management Index, quality of transformation management	MI: 4.97 points out of 10, Ranked: 83 out of 128 countries Classified: weak management
Democracy, including press status and corruption	World Democracy Audit November 2010	World Audit	World Democracy Rank: political freedom (FH) + press and corruption (TI)	World Democracy Ranking: 127 out of 150 countries, division 4 out of 4

Quantitative analysis of electoral democracy:

The elections analysed in this report produced the following electoral democracy quantitative results:

Degree of democracy in these elections	Measurement of democracy in these elections according to the Polyarchy 2.0 index, calculated by OPEMAM	ID: 23,99, max. 49 Part: 34,65, ¹ max. 70 Comp: 35,42, ² max. 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30)	Classification of the elections: Democratic
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Definition of the electoral and party systems:

The presidential elections are held using a two-round majority system with just one, national constituency. In the event that a candidate wins more than 50 percent of valid votes in the first round he is automatically declared the winner and a second round becomes unnecessary. If there is no winner in the first round, the two candidates with the most votes compete in a second round using the same majority system. The president is elected for a six-year term and cannot be re-elected according to the terms of the country's new legislation.

Kyrgyzstan has a multi-party system that can be considered both "floating" given the huge variations between the main parties from one election to the next, and "fragmented" in view of the high level of dispersion of votes and seats among parties. It is also a clientelist party system. The parties are hierarchical and personalistic, and the majority depend on rich business men. Although there are some differences, the interests they channel are mostly private or, are linked with informal networks with local rather than regional bases.

Impact of the electoral formula and constituency size on the elections:

In presidential elections that use two-round systems these factors are less important than in Kyrgyzstan's legislative elections. Although the votes are added up at electoral district level (there are 9 in total including 7 regions or

¹ Turnout has been calculated using the number of votes cast in 2011, 1,858,632 and the last population census published by the United Nations Statistics Office (UNSTATS) which put the population of Kyrgyzstan at 5,362,800 inhabitants on 24 March 2009. *Population and Housing Census of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2009*. Available at: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_PHC/Kyrgyzstan/A5-2PopulationAndHousingCensusOfTheKyrgyzRepublicOf2009.pdf

² Competition was calculated adding the percentage of votes won by the losing candidates in the first and only round of these elections, a total of 35.42%.

oblast plus two extra circumscriptions for the country's main cities Bishkek and Osh), what matters is the total number of votes across the country and not the number of electoral districts won.

But it is true that the two-round system influences candidates' calculations. This time round, Atambayev's main rivals strategies led them to wait for an eventual second round and not to unite in the first round. It would have been logical for the two strongest candidates from the south-east, Madumarov and Tashiev, to unite in a single candidacy against Atambayev who has a more solid support base in the north-east. Conscious of this situation, Atambayev spent the campaign emphasising that the best possible outcome would be to win in the first round and thereby avoid a regional confrontation in the second.

Results³:

Candidate	Party	Number of valid votes	Percentage of total valid votes ⁴
Almazbek Atambayev	SDPK	1,161,929	63.82%
Adajan Madumarov	Butun Kyrgyzstan	274,639	15.08%
Kamchybek Tashiev	Ata Zhurt	266,189	14.62%
Temirbek Asanbekov	Meken Yntymagi	17,232	0.94%
Omurbek Suvanaliev	Independent	16,143	0.88%
Kubatbek Baybolov	Independent	15,427	0.84%
Tursunbay Bakir uulu	Erkin Kyrgyzstan	15,195	0.83%
Anarbek Kalamatov	Ar-Namys	13,609	0.74%
Arstanbek Abdyl daev	El Uchun	8,770	0.48%
Marat Imankulov	Independent	5,578	0.3%
Kubanychbek Isabekov	Independent	3,239	0.17%
Kurmanbek Osmonov	Independent	2,452	0.13%
Akbpaly Aytikeev	Independent	2,081	0.11%
Topobay Kolubaev	Independent	1,941	0.1%
Sooronbay Diykanov	Independent	1,339	0.07%
Almazbek Karimov	Independent	1,305	0.07%
Option "Against all candidates"		13,419	0.73%
Total		1,820,487	100%

³ Both results tables were created by the author using data published by the Central Commission for Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic (TSIK): <http://cec.shailoo.gov.kg/i-election.asp?ElectionID=100&DistrictID=1380> (Consulted 20 November 2011, the official results were published two days before on 18 November). The total number of votes cast was 1,858,632, the percentage of votes for each candidate that appear on the official website are calculated using the total number of votes cast and not the number of valid votes which explains the slight difference between that data and what appears in the present tables. Thus, the total number of valid votes was 1,820,487, or 97.84% of the total number of votes cast.

⁴ Author's own calculation based on figures published by the TSIK.

Results of the three main candidates at constituency level (as a percentage)⁵

	Bishkek	Chuy	Naryn	Issyk Kul	Talas	Osh city	Osh oblast	Jalal-Abad	Batken
Atambayev	79.64	86.19	94.19	89.25	93.72	44.13	35.0	25.38	28.69
Tashiev	5.66	2.6	1.15	1.64	1.19	17.5	28.1	42.04	15.8
Madumarov	4.66	3.61	1.37	1.36	0.59	28.43	29.19	24.21	48.73

Qualitative analysis of the elections

Participation:

Officially, the turnout was 61.29%, with a total of 1,858,632 votes cast (1,820,487 valid and 38,145 invalid votes) from a total of 3,032,520 registered voters. Considered average to low this turnout exceeded that of the 2010 legislative elections (55.31%). The upside was that such a low figure led observers to discount a massive centralized manipulation of the figures by the central electoral commission. In Central Asia of course the norm is a high turnout, sometimes above 90 percent, to legitimate the president. However, as can be observed in the third results table, there is a huge difference between turnout in the electoral districts of the south - unquestionably low - and those of the north - suspiciously high. These suspicions are substantiated if turnout is compared to that of the 2010 legislative elections. The participation rate has remained stable or fallen slightly in the south while it has climbed exponentially in the north, where Atambayev had greater freedom to inflate the results (see table on following page).

Leaving aside these regional differences, the chief problem occurred in voting abroad due to a change in legislation which obliged voters to visit a consulate to do so. Given the number of Kyrgyz expatriates (between 700,000 and a million - roughly 20 percent of the population) this is not a minor issue. For example, around 600,000 Kyrgyz reside in Russia but there are only three consulates (in Moscow, Yekaterinberg and Novosibirsk). Given the vast distances in Russia, this change of legislation would have excluded hundreds of thousands of potential voters from registering to vote in that country alone. As a result, the official turnout abroad saw a drop from 63.06% in 2010 to just 8.06% of registered voters in 2011. But in fact, the turnout was much lower, given that only 38,056 Kyrgyz expatriates actually registered, this 8% corresponds to just 3,084 voters. If the legislation was detrimental to Kyrgyz emigrants, another change in the law was favourable to internal migrants. Due to a residency registration regime known as propiska, which limits the legal mobility of citizens, many Kyrgyz are not registered where they actually reside. To avoid their exclusion from the electoral rolls, they were allowed to vote outside of their regions, following registration on the census. Because of this, the preparation of the electoral roll was modified and became the responsibility of the local authorities. The new system obliged all citizens to check their enrolment details before the elections. Many did not do so and given that they were not enrolled, were thus unable to vote on election day.

⁵ In blue are the constituencies of the greater northern region, in red those of the south-east. The winner of each constituency appears in bold type.

Percentage of electoral turnout by region in the 2010 parliamentary elections and the 2011 presidential elections⁶:

	Bishkek	Chuy	Naryn	Issyk Kul	Talas	Osh ciudad	Osh oblast	Jalal-Abad	Batken	Extr.
October 2010 Parliamentary Elections	52.95	51.90	55.72	53.31	58.94	61.87	58.25	56.38	49.49	63.06
October 2011 Presidential Elections	59.52	84.51	76.16	71.26	84.90	49.70	52.73	49.91	48.45	8.06

Competition:

None of the main candidates had any problems fulfilling the registration requirements. Despite this, the combined total of just 36.09% of valid votes won by all the losing candidates seemed incongruous with elections in which a second round had seemed plausible. Competition was affected by two factors: disparities in the financing of each candidate and in the media coverage they received. In the first case, the real financing and spending of the candidates are unknown but two significant indicators do exist. On the one hand, the candidates are obliged to make a deposit of the total amount that they intend to spend on campaign material. Atambayev led the way with 35.5 million *soms*, Madumarov followed with 21.5 million and Kurmanbek Tashiev came far behind with just 13.4 million *soms*. On the other hand we can count the number of campaign offices opened by each candidate: Tashiev had 42, again behind Madumarov who had 46, but far behind Atambayev with 80. As for media coverage, Atambayev benefited from greater coverage and, according to the OSCE report, favourable coverage by the state channels KRTK and EITR.

Transparency:

Practically no observation mission or political analyst had any doubts about the existence of fraud, but all were similarly of the opinion that this did not affect the outcome of the elections. Everybody took for granted that Atambayev would win, even in the first round. Sources close to the OSCE mission affirm that fraud increased Atambayev's score by some 7 percent. If that is the case, Atambayev would have won with a percentage close to the necessary threshold of 50%. On election day, as on previous occasions, the main problems occurred during the vote counting and during the tabulating of the results. Thus, the OSCE mission's preliminary report mentions that the counting and tabulating processes were evaluated negatively by 28% of the observation teams. Given that this evaluation is reserved for cases where serious irregularities have been witnessed (polling station reports that have been pre-signed, deleted or rewritten, data introduced covertly in the computer system, refusal to allow observers into the tabulating centres, etc.) this percentage is certainly high.

Representation and debate:

Of the 16 candidates that ended up participating in these elections, 7 represented political parties - among them the three main candidates Atambayev, Tashiev and Madumarov who are also their parties' leaders. Although each party held a congress to vote on and formally select a candidate (as well as different *kurultay*, a simulation of the assembly institution present in

⁶ Both percentages are calculated using the total number of votes cast. The constituencies of the greater northern region appear in blue and those of the south-east in red.

Kyrgyz tribal nomad tradition), the truth is that the selection process is not competitive (no primaries are held). Instead it is vertical and closed with the party leaders deciding and no means for the grass roots of the parties to influence or control the process. Another problem affecting the representativeness of the candidates, is that there were no women candidates nor any representatives of the country's ethnic minorities. Particularly important was the fact that the Uzbek community in the south was kept at a distance from the electoral events due to the lack of security guarantees there since June 2010.

Ideology and public policy were virtually absent from the election campaign. Order, stability, development, unemployment and a foreign policy focused on Russia were common to all the candidates. Accordingly, what differentiated one from another was their relationship with the current Executive, their position on ethnic and national issues, their regional affiliation (north or south), as well as their emphasis or not on the country's democratization and on its system of government. Of interest is the fact that several televised debates took place, each featuring three candidates. Unfortunately, what was a good idea turned out to be a bland exercise given that firstly none of the major candidates coincided in any of the debates and, secondly, the candidates' focussed excessively on corruption scandals and judicial enquiries at the expense of discussing their political manifestos.

Openness:

In a neo-patrimonial institutional context like Kyrgyzstan's, politics is only open to the business elite and the networks associated with it. That said, it was hoped that these elections would play out as the first open-ended presidential elections in Central Asia's history, because even though opinion polls prior to the elections signalled victory for Atambayev, it was far from clear whether he would win by enough votes to escape a second round⁷. Ultimately however, the incumbent prime minister preferred to assure his victory in the first round using what are known as *administrative resources*⁸. The numerous and "significant irregularities"⁹ registered, along with more than 93 percent support for Atambayev in some regions, make it plausible that he opted to avoid in type of uncertainty and thus a second round. For this reason, even though everything would seem to indicate that Atambayev would have won in the first or the second round without the need for fraud, it must be concluded that these were

⁷ According to the final opinion poll carried out by M-Vector consultancy at the end of September, Atambayev was going to receive 57% of the votes, enough to be proclaimed winner in the first round. Tashiev and Madumarov's were accredited with a combined total of just 25.7% of votes.

⁸ In the post-Soviet sphere the term *administrative resources* is used to describe the use of the state's material resources by officialist candidates for their own benefit, as well as the "recruiting" of civil servants as aides both during the campaign as well as during the electoral process itself so as to guarantee a percentage of votes in their workplaces and/or their constituencies. This concept thus includes electoral fraud on polling day. In this case, cases of coercion were denounced at universities and hospitals, as well as numerous irregularities on election day. Different examples are given the preliminary reports of the international observation led by the OSCE and local observation organisations such as Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society y *Taza Shaloo*: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/84573>. In the case of Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, see: (First, Second, Third and Fourth) *Preliminary Report on the Results of Long-Term Observation of the Election of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic on October 30, 2011*.

⁹ *Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions*. International Election Observation. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly Of The Council Of Europe (PACE), and the European Parliament (EP). Kyrgyz Republic - Presidential Election, 30 October 2011.

not open elections.

Significance:

In the main, the relevance of these elections lay in the symbolic value involved in holding Central Asia's first presidential elections in twenty years in which the outcome was unsure and in which power would be transferred electorally. Regrettably as has been mentioned above, the first of these elements was certainly diminished by the partial fraud that boosted Atambayev's victory. Meanwhile, at an institutional level, these elections have presumably brought to a close the cycle of instability that followed Bakiyev's overthrow in April 2010 and will consolidate the semi-parliamentarian system of government in place since June 2010.¹⁰

International political reaction:

The priority in the region for both the US and EU is stability, which goes to explain why both powers received Atambayev's victory with pragmatic satisfaction. In the absence of any pro-western candidate, Atambayev was considered the least-bad option, at least in contrast with Tashiev and Madumarov who are both ethno-nationalists. Atambayev made the most of any appearance before the Kyrgyz and Russian media to make clear that his plan as president is to strengthen ties with Russia, to join the Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan¹¹, and to close the US military base in Manas¹². As for Russia, the Kremlin's preference for Atambayev was made clear in September, before the election campaign began, with broadcasts on the state channels not only of his meetings with the inner circle of Russia's politicians but also an extensive interview on the channel Vesty 24. It remains to be seen to what degree Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty will be threatened in a context in which its citizens have clearly opted to return back under Russia's wing¹³.

Conclusions:

The elections were not sufficiently democratic from a qualitative point of view - indeed they represent a step backwards from the democratization process embarked on following Bakiyev's overthrow. The abuse of administrative resources and the irregularities - not accounted for in the quantitative indicator shown on page 2 - leave no room for doubt. As the staff of the different local and international observation missions confirmed: the high hopes placed on these

¹⁰ A more detailed dissection of the relevance of these elections by the same author can be found in OPEMAM's pre-electoral analysis published at: http://www.observatorioelectoral.es/en/ImgBase/PA-Kyrgyzstan_2011_Why_these_elections_are_and_are_not_significant.pdf

¹¹ Kyrgyzstan's request to join the Customs Union was accepted two weeks after the elections.

¹² In fact, the latest reports indicate that Otunbayeva has agreed to transform the base into a civilian airport: <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/politics/full/2792>

¹³ A survey by the International Republican Institute shows that the Kyrgyz population (a term applied to all citizens of the country, be they ethnically Kyrgyz or not) is in favour of aligning the country's foreign policy towards the Russian zone of influence. 95% of those surveyed consider Russia to be Kyrgyzstan's most important partner, whereas 34% see the USA as its main political and economic threat, a figure only slightly surpassed by Uzbekistan. The survey shows that some 75% of Kyrgyz would not be against future integration with Russia.

elections were dashed. It can thus be inferred that the country's authoritarian legacy persists, materializing here as it did to prevent the country from holding truly open fraud-free elections.

But to be positive, it should be underlined that the country has gotten through its elections without unleashing a new crisis of political instability. The post-electoral protests begun by supporters of Tashiev and Madumarov involved the blocking of the highway between Osh and Jalalabat on the day following the elections. Subsequently, the protests that had been arranged were cancelled following negotiations between Atambayev and these two candidates, supposedly with the intention of integrating them into the new government structure. It was speculated that Tashiev would replace Atambayev as prime minister (even though everything seemed to indicate that Babanov, the current deputy PM would hold that post) and Madumarov would hold the post of governor of Batken, his political *fatherland*. It was additionally speculated that early parliamentary elections could have been agreed on for 2012. However, political events over the course of December proved that no such agreement was reached. The coalition government that linked Atambayev and Tashiev's parties split up and a new arrangement was formed by four of the five parties in parliament, excluding only *Ata Zhurt* - Tashiev's party. Omurbek Babanov, leader of Respublika, is the new prime minister, thus rewarded for his decision to stay out of the presidential race and back Atambayev.

In this way, two primary readings can be made of the institutional context now facing Kyrgyzstan. On the one hand, the new government coalition is broad enough in terms both of MPs (it includes 92 out of 120, or 76 percent) and in terms of parties (four out of the five parties in the parliament) to guarantee the governability of the house and to avoid early elections. However, in Kyrgyzstan relations of power do not lie mainly in the formal institutions. Reality indicates that the political parties and politicians with influence in the country's south-east have been left out of the formal distribution of power (none of the parties that won in the *oblast* and regions of the south in the 2010 parliamentary elections form part of the coalition government) and this must be taken into account when making forecasts about the country's future stability. Atambayev has opted not to formally include these southern players in his government, but it is unknown if informal agreements have been reached related with the management of these regions or about the economic activity of the networks and allies of Tashiev and Madumarov. In any case, although the possibility of early elections has apparently decreased thanks to the new coalition government, much will depend on how much pressure the informal networks from the south - obviously less than happy with their share of power - can and/or are willing to exert. Anything is possible in a country which has held five national elections and two referendums in the last 6 years, not to mention two revolutions in the same period.

Reference to other similar online analyses of these elections:

- Fumagalli, Mateo. Post-Election Report: Kyrgyz President, en "The American Prospect" 2 November 2011. <http://prospect.org/article/post-election-report-kyrgyz-president>
- The Institute for Public Policy IPP, Kyrgyzstan Experts On The Election – Analysis. <http://www.eurasiareview.com/06112011-kyrgyzstan-experts-on-the-election-analysis/>